

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to request your support for extending the ban on semiautomatic assault weapons (AWB) by encouraging the Congress to consider H.R. 3831, legislation to simply extend the ban for another 10 years. Unless Congress acts, the ban on semiautomatic assault weapons will expire on September 13, 2004.

We strongly believe that during the next several months, public momentum will build in support of extending this ban. There are many who would like this ban to expire, without debate, enabling the issue to become predominant in the upcoming elections. If public awareness builds earlier, the expiration of this ban will undoubtedly become a major issue of minority propaganda. Many will say, in an election year, that Republicans are ignoring the pleas of law enforcement and families who support common sense gun control measures. It is vital that a straight 10-year reauthorization of the AWB come from Republicans, early, to avoid an inevitable backlash.

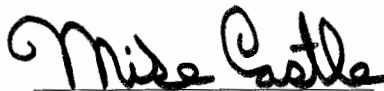
There is, without a doubt, strong support from Republicans in both the House and Senate to extend the ban. There are even some who did not vote for the ban 10 years ago who support its renewal. This decision shows courage and a deep commitment to keeping America's streets safe. The AWB has reduced crime dramatically, while protecting the rights of law-abiding gun owners better than many of us predicted it would 10 years ago.

Every major law-enforcement organization in America supports an extension of the ban. Law enforcement led the fight for the original assault weapons ban because of the threat these military-style weapons posed to police officers and public safety. According to Department of Justice data, the proportion of banned assault weapons traced to crimes has dropped by more than 65 percent since 1995. Reauthorization of the ban is supported by: the Major Cities Chiefs, International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Brotherhood of Police Officers, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association, Police Executive Research Forum, and the Fraternal Order of Police support. Additionally, local police chiefs and sheriffs across the nation have expressed their strong support for an extension of this important ban.

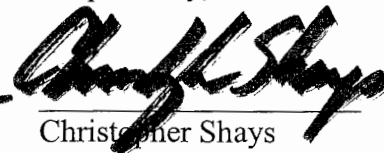
H.R. 3831 represents a strong compromise. Other bills have been introduced to renew the ban on semi-assault weapons; one seeks to extend the ban permanently and another is far more sweeping in the types of guns it outlaws. A simple reauthorization of the assault weapons ban, which effects have made a substantial impact on gun crime and gun violence without infringing on the rights of law-abiding citizens, is the sensible solution. The AWB has been in effect for nearly a decade and not one hunter has lost his right to hunt, nor has one homeowner lost his power to defend his home. We have proven that the Second Amendment can thrive while we take limited and reasonable measures to protect Americans from gun violence.

Mr. President, we sincerely hope that you will stand by your decision to sign an extension of the AWB and, additionally, encourage Republicans in the House and Senate to bring this important legislation to a vote.

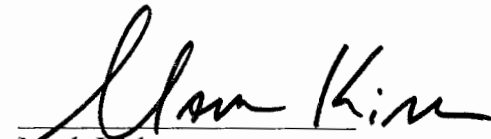
Respectfully,



Michael N. Castle
Member of Congress



Christopher Shays
Member of Congress



Mark Kirk
Member of Congress

cc: Speaker Dennis Hastert
Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.